The PREVENTION CONNECTION
NEWSLETTER

Building a Path to the Future: *Foster Care in Montana*

By Chuck Hunter, Administrator, Child and Family Services Division, Department of Public Health and Human Services

Children come into the foster care system because they were subjected to abuse and neglect, and the long-term effects manifest themselves in a variety of complex ways. Today, about 500,000 children are living in foster care in this country, and every year, 25,000 of them will reach the age of eighteen. This year alone, right here in Montana, there are approximately 2,100 children in foster care in Montana, nearly 1,700 of whom fall between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. About two hundred of them are, or soon will be, eighteen. Even so, many, if not most, of these eighteen-year-olds will be cut loose, left to fend for themselves because they no longer qualify for foster care services. These children and youth are host to a variety of issues, none of which are magically erased at age 18. Few of these young people are prepared to live successfully on their own without a support system. The results are often tragic, both for these kids and their communities. Consider that:

- 40% of Montana's foster children leave care without a GED or a high school diploma.
- A survey of Montana foster children between the ages of 18 and 21 shows that they have a great deal of difficulty after leaving our care – particularly during the time frame between 12 and 18 months after cessation of foster care. They report an increase in homelessness, unemployment, drug and alcohol use, non-marital pregnancy and involvement with the legal system.
- 58% of the children surveyed indicated that they will have no one to turn to for social, emotional or financial support after leaving foster care.

These numbers indicate that those who leave foster care in Montana are not faring as well as their same-age peers. It is up to us to more actively protect our investment in these kids, to make sure that when children leave this system they have the capacity to be assets rather than liabilities within their communities.

The Foster Care Independence Act . . .

better known as the *John Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act*, was signed into law by President Clinton in December 1999. This substantially changed the landscape of the federally-funded independent living programs. In effect, the Chaffee Act gives states latitude in their dealings with the young people transitioning from foster care. Some of the more significant provisions include:

- **The federal allotment for Title IV-E independent living programs has doubled from $70 million to $140 million.**
- **Montana's allotment has also doubled, from $250 thousand to $500 thousand.**
- **The scope of the term *independent living* has been broadened by lowering the minimum age of 16 to 13, and by expanding support services to young people until age 21.**
- **Consultation with the tribes is required and services must be equally available to Indian children and non-Indian children.**
- **States must coordinate their independent living programs with other state- and federally-funded programs for youth - especially juvenile justice programs, housing programs, and school-to-work programs.**
- **Broad input must be put into developing a five-year plan that must be submitted to each state.**

The Jan and Vicki Column

Transitions and Mobility

One summer evening this past year, I had the opportunity to go on a "ride along" with the Helena Police Department. This experience led to a dialogue with a group of young people between the ages of six and fifteen, all of whom lived in a large public housing complex. During the course of the conversation, several indicated that they were new to the community or had lived in the community for less than one full school year.

One nine-year old had already lived in three states and attended five elementary schools. Seemingly advanced for her age, she was wearing make-up and deodorant, and already shaving her legs. The oldest of three siblings, it quickly became apparent that she was playing a large role in "parenting" her siblings. When asked her thoughts on smoking and drinking, she shrugged, then mentioned that her mother smoked and her dad drank, which was why they have moved. When asked about her dreams, she said, "I want to go to high school and be a model when I turn eighteen."

Just as the prevalence of mobility and transitions can predict increases in youth problem behaviors with substance abuse, delinquency, and school drop-out, this conversation portends difficulties to come. The more often people move, the greater the risk.

When communities are characterized by frequent transition rates, there is an increase in problem behaviors. According to the Hawkins and Catalano research, communities with high rates of mobility appear to be linked to an increased risk of drug and crime problems. We have become such a mobile society that most of you will be able to relate to the twin themes for this issue: Transitions and Mobility. Only through understanding can we begin to enhance the protective factors/assets that will help ease transitions for individuals, families and our communities.

Vicki

Montana Prevention Resource Center
P.O. Box 4210, Helena, MT 59604
Web Site: www.state.mt.us/prc

Co-coordinators
Jan Lombardi
(406) 444-1928
jlombardi@state.mt.us *and*

Vicki Turner
(406) 444-5986
vturner@state.mt.us

Mandi Shulund
Administrative Support
(406) 444-9772
mschulund@state.mt.us

Erin Jemison
VISTA Leader, (406) 444-3925

Aaron Lessen
VISTA, (406) 444-9654

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Notes From the Edge: *On My Own*

By Kim Simonton

All teenagers dream about moving out and being on their own. To them "independence" means no parents yelling or screaming at them, telling them what they can and cannot do. It means no bedtime and no curfew. Friends can come over at anytime they want and leave when they want because there is no one there to tell them to leave. To me, independence was an escape from everything that I had known for most of my life.

For years, I was bounced from one home to another, anywhere that would keep me for a few months or until they became angry with me and sent me away. I moved from place to place and school to school, never making friends because I never knew when I would have to say goodbye. After awhile, I could not do it anymore.

At the beginning of my sophomore year in high school, I was living at a foster home that I had been in for a while. I was making friends and enjoying my life as a teenager. However, there were a few things that just made life hard to bear. The home I was in was all right, but I never felt like I belonged. I began to wish that there were something else I could do. One day I got a call from my social worker and she told me of a program that was being started for kids in foster care who were about to make the transition into living on their own. It was called Independent Living and it would make leaving foster care easier to deal with.

Before the beginning of this program, kids in foster care would be on their own at the age of 18 or when they graduated high school, whichever came last. With no idea how to pay bills, balance a checkbook or find an apartment, many failed. The program was designed to help kids learn how to do all of this and more while living on their own.

I was one of the first four people to join the program here in Great Falls. I entered the program the middle of my junior year. They helped me find an apartment close to school and work and then paid part of my rent each month. They taught me how to balance my time, be responsible in paying my bills on time each month, and they even helped me find money so I could go to college. I stayed in the program until I graduated high school in January of 1999, and I can say that without the help of the program and its directors, I do not think I would be where I am today.

Today, almost two years after completing the program, Kim Simonton is holding down two jobs, attending a university, and making her own way.

Strangers in our Midst: *A Child Welfare Perspective*

By Fred Fisher, Community Development Specialist, Casey Family Programs

The impact of transition and mobility on children and families involved in the child welfare system is multi-faceted. This article will briefly highlight two distinctly different but related dimensions to this issue: transition and mobility as risk factors in child maltreatment, and the impact of transition and mobility on the maltreated child's capacity to heal.

Studies documenting environmental risk factors that place families at high risk for abusing or neglecting their children are scarce and have a variety of methodological problems that impede our ability to generalize their findings and conclusions. The research literature does show a consistent correlation between parental child abuse and social isolation, lack of contextual support, high levels of mobility, alienation from the community, and environmental stressors like poverty, low occupational and educational status, lack of access to needed community resources, and a predisposition to serious life crises.

One can infer from the research the nature of the relationship between high levels of mobility and child abuse. In thinking through these inferences, one is also able to imagine scenarios that put highly mobile parents at risk for child abuse or neglect. Highly mobile families are more likely to lack connections to the life of the communities they enter. Their extended kinship network has been left behind. They may have little or no support from relatives or may be alienated from family. When a family is constantly on the move, there are fewer caring eyes consistently on a child at school, at day care, and in the neighborhood. Parents are often unable to find stable employment, and as a result have difficulty finding safe, affordable housing. Family shelter facilities are not widely available despite the increasing numbers of homeless families with children, while existing shelters are often unsafe for children.

As discussed in Dr. Messinger's article on page 7, educating the children of highly mobile families can also be fraught with difficulty. In sum, these families are, as John McKnight calls them, "strangers in our midst." They are offered neither the opportunity nor the invitation to participate and contribute to community life. Day-to-day life for a highly mobile family can be isolated, unpredictable, chaotic, dangerous, and stressful. In short, these families experience all of the correlates of child maltreatment.

Once an abused or neglected child comes into foster care, transition and mobility take on new but equally perilous dimensions. Maltreated children are at extremely high risk for developing insecure or maladaptive attachments. In some children, these disordered attachments are characterized by superficial relationships, avoidance of intimacy, rejection of affection and caring, pervasive lack of trust, a strong need to control and manipulate others, volatility, anger, and hostility. As a result, it is not unusual to hear the stories of young people in the system who have experienced ten or even twenty placements before the age of eighteen.

Recent data indicate that children in foster care in Montana experience an average of 3.81 placements. The maladaptations described above pose significant barriers to successful family adjustment in foster and adoptive homes, and increase the risk of placement disruption. The ability to attach is further weakened with each move. Children in these circumstances are often in a state of constant stress and grieving. The cycle of unresolved emotional stress has long term developmental, psychological, and sociological impacts. The result is continuing damage and trauma to children who have already experienced more hurt than any child or person should have to endure.

Caring communities can do a lot to ameliorate the conditions described above. Family shelter facilities, well-stocked food banks, affordable housing options, a network of volunteers, accessible health clinics, and the like protect families who are experiencing stress and are at high risk for abusing or neglecting their children. Abused and neglected children can begin to heal if they find berth in a safe, nurturing, and supportive community. Protective factors for hurt children include a network of skilled foster and adoptive parents and respite care providers. Civic groups can be supportive by encouraging their members to serve as mentors, by sponsoring clothing drives, assisting with dental expenses, and the like. Likewise, there are countless ways for the faith community to be involved in the life of a hurt child or a family in stress. Protective communities support families who are highly mobile, and they nurture abused and neglected children by creating new circles of care to take the place of those that have been lost.

The Prevention Connection

Sherrie Downing
Editor
(406) 443-0580
Fax: (406) 443-0869
E-mail: sdowning@imine.net
or SLDowning@aol.com

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Ghost Children

Entrenched in a Methamphetamine Nightmare

By MaryAnn Kaler, PRC VISTA

The Montana Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation currently has seven drug task force regions, but according to the Criminal Investigation Division, this is not enough. Methamphetamine abuse and manufacturing have reached epidemic proportions in Montana.

— David Morales, a Billings law enforcement officer and former truant officer, reported dealing with the methamphetamine problem among ten and eleven year old children, who are either on the drug or suffering abuse at the hands of spun-out relatives. "I call them ghost children," he says. "I see them all the time."

June 22, 1998:
Time Magazine

While this story was set in Billings, its truths are not specific to any one community, nor have the two years that have passed since meant that the problem has been solved.

Meth is non-discriminatory. It crosses urban, rural and gender boundaries. Teenagers may mistakenly believe that the drug is safe and be attracted by the perception of a long-lasting "high." Whatever the reasons, use among high school seniors more than doubled between 1990 and 1996 ("*Monitoring the Future*," March and April 2000 Survey). Even more frightening are survey results showing that teenagers as young as 14-and15-years old are using and selling the drug. (Koch Crime Institute).

Meth manufacturing and sales lead to high levels of transience. Frequent relocation may be necessary to keep law enforcement at bay while continuing to manufacture and/or sell the drug. And while sophisticated site-based labs are used for larger commercial operations, smaller labs are frequently used in rural areas. These portable meth labs can be moved with ease: the equipment may be no more cumbersome than a small suitcase (Criminal Investigation Division).

For children and youth of all ages, the social costs associated with family methampehtamine abuse are horrendous. Living with parents involved in the use, distribution or manufacture of methamphetmines causes extreme disruption in a child's development. For children whose homes double as meth labs, isolation is the norm, causing most to fail to attach to community or school. They can't invite friends over or talk about their home lives for fear that the "family secret" will be discovered. At the same time, parental behavior becomes unpredictable. There are also grave physical dangers associated with producing the drug: meth labs produce toxic flammable fumes that can cause lung, brain, kidney and liver damage.

> ***"And what about communication in the family? Who is raising the meth abuser's children? Many have neglected their dependents' welfare and need for guidance, opting instead for a relationship with methamphetamine. In adolescence, communication with family members is difficult enough. This is a time when the adolescent is caught between desire for independence and adult privilege, but has not fully developed the necessary capacity to effectively assume adult responsibilities and leave childhood behind." (Koch Crime Institute)***

Children removed from their homes due to parental abuse/neglect stemming from methamphetamine use are placed in foster care, but increasing numbers of children entering the foster care system have meant a shortage of foster homes. Siblings may be separated, and children moved from home to home. Chris Purcell from the Department of Health and Human Services in Billings states, "State workers are trying to do a better job of initially placing children with relatives or in foster homes that could become more permanent homes if they can't be reunited with their natural parents." (Billings Gazette, March 1999).

This issue has become so pervasive and has such far-reaching consequences that the Prevention Resource Center and the Montana Council for Families are supporting a project that will study the relationships between methamphetamine and child abuse, neglect and fatalities. VISTA volunteers have implemented the project, the goal of which will be to start a public awareness campaign with regard to the correlations among child abuse and neglect and fatalities (CAN/F) at the hands of parent(s) or caregivers who use methamphetamines.

The project began with research on the scope of the methamphetamine problem in Montana. To grasp the depth of the problem, interviews were conducted with law enforcement professionals, direct service agency directors, treatment and mental health professionals, as well as child protection professionals, reporters and others. After completing the research phase, professionals from the abovementioned service areas will be invited to attend a round table to determine an appropriate direction for a public awareness campaign. Only through public education, awareness, and involvement of community leaders can we begin to have an impact on the nightmare of methamphetamine abuse.

MaryAnn Kaler, a PRC VISTA, works with the Montana Council For Families in Missoula. She can be reached at mackaler@hotmail.com.

Transitions Big and Small

By Mary Jane Standaert, Director
Head Start/State Collaboration Office

Have you ever considered the transitions that you make in a single day? Have you asked yourself what makes those transitions from home to work, to meetings, to the store, to school or child care, and home again stressful or positive?

Among very young children, the comfort or discomfort of even the smallest transitions can make a difference. Recent research in early brain development has proven that early relationships are critical to forming the neural pathways and connections that enable a child to learn and grow in a positive direction. Continuity of care, language-rich environments and warm nurturing relationships are at the core of successful child rearing. What works best for children and families is the ideal "village," which shares responsibility and creates a connected continuum of services for the child and his/her family.

Early childhood programs, including Head Start, attempt to help children and families through normal transitions. Children getting ready to move from Head Start to kindergarten, for example, might go on a field trip to the "big" school. Local early childhood professionals often sponsor information nights for parents where they can hear from spokespeople from different schools and philosophies. Readiness materials are provided and parents are encouraged to get involved. Some early childhood programs even provide written information about the child's accomplishments and needs, so that parents have something to share with the new school or child care provider. In like manner, family literacy programs have strong transition components for adults and children. Whether it be further education, jobs, new living situations or another program, each member has a transition plan.

There are many reasons to provide activities focused on transitioning children from one program to another. While academics are important, social skills and emotional development are also critical to the productive learning and use of academic skills. Consequently, transitions for children and their families are a prime time to minimize risk factors, identify needs and provide support. The ideal is that *all* children be appropriately transitioned. Since many parents have had negative experiences with schools or social services, they do not know what to do or say, how to be interested without being intrusive, or how to help at home. Setting the stage can empower parents to serve as partners. Informing the new school or program about *this* child's likes and fears, particular strengths or weaknesses can form an invaluable rapport. Planning ahead is important to overall and long term success.

We do not educate and care for children separately or in isolation. Though most children do not come to us with paperwork that identifies all their needs or strengths, all come with a history and all are in transition. Helping families through transition means providing support, encouragement and a sense of connection. Ultimately, good transitions can empower children and mean the difference between success and failure in a new environment.

Transitions and Mobility

Even normal school transitions predict increases in problem behaviors. When children move from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school, significant increases in the rates of drug use, school misbehavior, and delinquency result.

Communities with high rates of mobility appear to be linked to an increased risk of drug and crime problems. The more often people in a community move, the greater the risk of both criminal behavior and drug-related problems in families. While some people find buffers against the negative effects of mobility by making connections in new communities, others are less likely to have the resources to deal with the effects of frequent moves and are more likely to have problems.

From WestCAPT website: (http://www.open.org/~westcapt/bprf.htm)

PNA

- *According to the 2000 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, 42.1% of 8th grade students, 44.8% of 10th grader students and 41.7% of 12th grade students report experiencing Transitions & Mobility as a risk factor in their lives. The data does not show a significant change from the 1998 survey.*
- *Relative to the Transitions & Mobility scale, when normed on a national level, 44% of kids were considered to be at risk. Montana is at or slightly below the national mean for students experiencing this risk factor.*

Questions from the Prevention Needs Assessment Survey that define the Transitions & Mobility risk scale included:

1. *Have you changed homes within the past year?*
2. *How many times have you changed homes since Kindergarten?*
3. *Have you changed schools in the past year?*
4. *How many times have you changed schools since Kindergarten?*

For more information on the PNA survey and the 2000 results, contact Pete Surdock at 406-444-1290 or psurdock@state.mt.us.

To see a calendar of upcoming events, please see our website: www.state.mt.us/prc

The Tumbleweed Runaway Program, Inc.

By Jeff Davis, Executive Director

Runaway and Homeless Youth

Estimates of the numbers of adolescent runaway, homeless and street youth vary from 500,000 to 1.3 million. Many have left home to escape abuse or because their parents could not meet their basic needs. They often drop out of school, forfeiting their opportunities to learn and to become independent, self-sufficient, contributing members of society. While living on the streets, they are highly vulnerable and may be exploited by drug dealers or become victims of street violence. Gangs may seem to provide protection and a sense of extended family, and shoplifting, survival sex or dealing drugs may become avenues to food, shelter, clothing and meeting other daily expenses. On the street, youth often try to survive with little or no contact with medical professionals. This means health problems go untreated and worsen. Without the support of family, schools and community, they may not acquire the personal values and work skills that will enable them to enter or advance in the world of work. Finally, as street people, they often have substantial law enforcement problems. All of these issues, real and potential, call for a community-based approach.

We believe there are significant numbers of children out on the street who are not using our services. These are marginalized kids who don't want to come to the attention of the authorities. They do everything they can to keep a low profile, and they are struggling everyday just to survive. Last year, Tumbleweed assisted 611 Yellowstone County youth in crisis, including 229 kids who were homeless, runaways, or planning to run away.

Through the new Street Outreach Program, Tumbleweed staff will begin taking basic services directly to kids on the streets, offering food, clothing, transportation, shelter and other immediate survival needs to runaway and homeless youth between the ages of ten and eighteen.

The stated purpose of the Street Outreach Program is to provide education and prevention services to runaway, homeless and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of sexual exploitation or abuse.

Street-based Services: Services provided to runaway and homeless youth and street youth in areas where they congregate, designed to assist such youth in making healthy personal choices regarding where they live and how they behave.

While some youth find Tumbleweed on their own, others are referred through schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies. Outreach workers provide opportunities for street youth to develop caring and trusting relationships with adults, and encourage youth to access shelter services or other safe, stable living environments. Tumbleweed's outreach staff will work closely with the YWCA Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Program.

Developing the Outreach program involved creating a broad base of community support. Patty Nordlund, of the Big Sky Economic Development Authority's Community Development Program, helped prepare the grant application, which included letters of support from eighteen community organizations and leaders. The Youth Services Center, the new Child and Family Intervention Project Youth Assessment Center, Healthcare for the Homeless, and the Montana Rescue Mission are among the organizations that will work with the Tumbleweed Outreach Program.

Tumbleweed Runaway Program, Inc. was recently awarded a federal grant of $87,687 to initiate the Street Outreach Program in Yellowstone County. The federal grant, renewable for two more years, was awarded by the Region VIII Office for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. Davis says financial support from the community will be essential to success. The grant covers about 60 percent of the $146,790 needed to operate the program. Community donations will be needed to fund the remaining 40 percent. Davis believes the community will respond. "I think the people of Yellowstone County will want to help keep us out there on the front lines for our kids."

For more information, or to volunteer, contribute or access Tumbleweed services, call 259-2558 or visit the Tumbleweed Web Site at: tumbleweed@montana.net.

Student Mobility

By Bruce Messinger, Ph.D., Superintendent, Helena Public Schools

Students who frequently change schools experience academic, social and emotional impacts. The most obvious negative impact is academic: without question, there is a lack of continuity in lessons and skill development. Beyond academic performance, students face the challenge of developing new relationships. Resilient kids are usually fine: they are socially and emotionally mature and have developed successful relationships in the past. But for many, this is yet another opportunity to fail.

The average mobility rate in Helena's public elementary schools is approximately eighteen percent. This means that over the course of the school year, about one out of six students left or joined the classroom setting. Over the last five years, individual elementary schools within the Helena Public School system experienced mobility rates ranging from a high of forty percent to a low of five percent. Our secondary schools ranged from a low of thirteen percent to a high of thirty-six percent.

Student mobility rate: the number of students who enter school after the first week or leave school before the last week of school.

The impact of changing schools is not always negative. The change may be the result of a positive opportunity for the family; if the family helps provide an adequate support system and a good transition plan, the student will probably be successful in the new setting. Unfortunately, moves often reflect desperate attempts to endure despite the crushing demands of meeting the family's basic needs with limited resources. Many families are forced to move again and again as they struggle just to survive. Stress within the family carries over into the school day and in many cases, parents may not be willing or able to create effective transition plans for their children.

The first challenge schools face when a new student joins the classroom is determining the level of skills or knowledge already achieved. School records are helpful, but they reveal only some of the information needed. Teachers must work with parents and previous schools to form a student profile and use them to develop an appropriate educational program. When dealing with frequent moves, problems are compounded. Ultimately, pinpointing a mobile student's academic needs begins to feel like putting a puzzle together. Most of the time, pieces are missing.

Students struggling with social transition can be so consumed by their efforts to develop friendships or to deal with conflicts that they cannot focus on learning. Partially because they are uncomfortable in the social setting, these students frequently have poor attendance. All told, high mobility can be a recipe for school failure.

In addition to considering the welfare of the individual student, educators must consider the impact student mobility has on the class as a whole. Mobility results in the loss of friendships and the change of the social structure. When there is a high mobility rate, these factors can affect the success of the class as a whole. School personnel must anticipate change and develop solid plans to support all aspects of transition.

Each of Helena's schools creates its own school improvement plan, which includes strategies for enhancing student performance and creating a school climate that will foster success. Schools experiencing high levels of mobility must devote extra effort to addressing this issue. Generally, most of the emphasis is placed on the transition process and early support to the student.

In addition to providing academic support, schools make an effort to assist students with social transition. Whether students are six or sixteen, they need support when dealing with mobility. There is a much better chance of success if faculty and students make an effort to be inclusive. In this case, proactive planning might include a welcoming committee of students and an orientation to the school setting.

Although there will inevitably be variables educators cannot control, the school community can make a real difference for new students. Since mobile students are at risk of school failure, we have the ethical and professional obligation to design the most effective support systems possible.

Reaching Out to Youth

The Flagship Program coordinates Tutoring/Mentoring Programs in schools, with a goal of connecting youth with positive role models of different ages. These programs enhance the academic abilities of students, instill an ethic of service and promote positive lifestyles. In the high schools, Flagship Program Tutors/Mentors are college-age community members who work one-on-one with high school students once a week, during the school day. They help with homework, visit or just hang out. This hugely-successful program provides high school students with someone to look up to and to befriend. In the middle schools, sessions take place after school. Participants attend Monday through Thursday, and college-aged community members and high school students serve as tutors. In both cases, academics are not the only area emphasized. Older students model healthy lifestyles and provide insight on dealing with the many transitions encountered during and after the school years.

For more information, contact VISTA Shelley Conner at C.S. Porter Middle School in Missoula at 406-542-4039.

Moving on . . . Moving Out

Transition and School Mobility as Risk Factors

By Kirk A. Astroth, Ph.D.

A researcher friend of mine once remarked that if you wanted to invent a social institution that would *really* mess kids up, you couldn't invent anything better than a junior high school. His point was that just when youth are undergoing a host of biological, cognitive and psychological changes, they are expected to change schools – not just once, but twice. Often, academic achievement and participation in extra-curricular activities go down, feelings of being anonymous and rates of drug abuse go up. This may be coincidence, but then again, maybe we need to ask some hard questions about student transitions and mobility.

The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) of 8th graders (Smith, 1995) found that 31 percent of respondents had changed schools two or more times between first and eighth grades. Nearly ten percent had changed schools *two more times* between 8th and 12th grades. And these changes were exclusive of regular promotions between elementary, middle and high schools. Here in the U.S., residential mobility is also high, particularly when compared with other western nations. A recent study found that 50 percent of all school-age children in the U.S. moved at least twice before they were 18 years old, and that ten percent moved at least six times (Wood et. al., 1993). Even so, student mobility has received relatively little attention from researchers.

Most people believe that changes in residency and changes in schools are detrimental – to schools as well as to students. There is evidence to suggest that these beliefs are well-grounded. For instance:

— Fourth and eighth grade students who changed schools one or more times in the previous two years scored significantly lower than did other students on math proficiency exams (Education Week, 1993)

— Frequent school changes for 3rd grade students were associated with a host of problems, including nutrition and health problems, below grade-level reading scores and grade retention (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1994).

— Students who change schools during elementary or high school are more likely to drop out of school (Smith, 1995).

— When compared with those who never or infrequently moved, children in families that moved frequently (six or more times by age 18) were 50 to 100 percent more likely to experience delayed growth and development, have a learning disorder, repeat a grade, or exhibit four or more frequently-occurring behavioral problems (Wood, et al., 1994).

Two researchers have recently begun looking more closely at student mobility. Their data, as reported in the *American Journal of Education*, has shed additional light on this risk factor. Using the NELS:88 study as their foundation, Rumberger and Larson (1998) examined the incidence of student mobility between the 8th and 12th grades, demographic family and school factors associated with student mobility, and mobility's consequences for school completion. The results are sobering.

As in other studies, Rumberger and Larson found that about 25 percent of 8th graders changed schools during the next four years, excluding the changes that result from promotion from middle or junior high school to high school. Moreover, they found that school changes were not simply a result of residential changes. Although more than one-third of 8th graders changed residences in this same period, students who moved were just as likely *not* to change schools. Rumberger and Larson found that 30 percent of school changes between the 8th and 12th grades did not in-

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NET: An Alternative to Suspension

By Joe Furshong, Director, Special Services, Helena Public Schools

What do students do when they are suspended? Are they home, completing assignments or hanging out where they shouldn't be? With the intention of providing an alternative to traditional suspension, the Helena Public School District and the Lewis & Clark County Probation Department developed the Network for Educational Transitions (NET). Staffed by two county employees and one from the Helena Public Schools, NET provides a supervised setting where suspended students can complete homework assignments and earn credit for completed work. Students are referred at the discretion of the building administrator, and assignments are faxed to NET prior to the first day of attendance. Student and parents must agree to the NET placement and sign contracts governing attendance. Students must display appropriate behavior and follow all rules, including working on assignments. Parents must transport their students to and from the program. Now in its third year of operation, NET serves fifth graders, middle and high school students. Administrators and parents report high levels of satisfaction with the program, and daily attendance is running between five and fifteen students.

For more information about NET, contact: Marvin Williams or Joe Furshong at the Helena Public Schools Special Services Department: 406-447-8585.

Transitions and School Mobility

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volve a change of residence. At the same time, school and residential changes were more likely among lower socio-economic status (SES) students than among higher SES students.

Students who changed schools, even once, were less likely to complete high school, even taking into account student and family background and educational experiences in the 8th grade. While their analysis could not demonstrate that school mobility caused school drop out, the results do support the conclusion that "student mobility represents an important risk factor that greatly reduces the odds of completing high school."

Significantly, this research found that school mobility (and thus school dropout) appears to reflect the level of a student's educational alienation. High absentee rates, misbehavior, low educational expectations and poor grades all serve as indicators as to whether a student changed schools or dropped out during the four years of high school.

Researchers suggest some tactics that can enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors. First, the protective factors: if we are to prevent school changes and increase the likelihood of graduation (one of the nation's six educational goals and an ICC goal), schools must work to increase a student's sense of membership (affiliation) in the school and his/her engagement (social and academic) in the school environment. Schools must create a vibrant climate that students feel is nurturing and personalized. They must engage with adults who care about them and who are emotionally available.

At the same time, schools can reduce risk. We've heard a lot from those who advocate removing disruptive students so the others can learn, but this strategy significantly reduces the odds of high school completion for that segment of the school population. Schools must find ways to work with unruly or difficult students rather than administratively transferring "troublesome" students to another school or an alternative setting.

Two recent case studies of urban high schools uncovered schools' complicity in high student turnover (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991). In one school, administrators actively tried to get rid of unruly students by forcing them to leave or illegally telling them they had to leave the school. In the other case, school policies and procedures encouraged disciplinarians to use suspension, transfers, and involuntary "drops" to force problematic students out. Unfortunately, the indicators teachers used to identify troublemakers are the very same factors which place students "at risk" of dropping out.

The conclusions from both studies are clear: transferring or expelling unruly students greatly increases the odds that such students will NOT graduate from high school and further perpetuates racial and class differences in the larger society. School officials must accept that their disciplinary policies and "daily activities play an important role in regulating social mobility." (Bowdtich, 1993, p. 507).

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With the Speed of Life: *Positive Transition*

By Judy Garrity

In past millennia, societal changes were very slow. The children of one generation lived much as their parents, grandparents, and distant ancestors had. Such continuity is no longer the case. The explosion of knowledge, the advances in technology, and the increase in human longevity have irrevocably altered our lives. The pace of life is accelerating and by all indications, will continue to do so.

In his book, ***Waking Up In Time****, Peter Russell states that "to live with continued acceleration and all the changes it brings will take more than simply learning to manage better. It will force a complete revision of our thinking about who we are, what we really want, and what life is all about."*

Enter the Life, Career or Corporate Coach. In essence, a Coach helps clients live more conscious lives by identifying where they find meaning and fulfillment and by taking action on their own behalf. This means consciously choosing transitions. Sometimes it means going for the brass ring. At other times, it means slowing the pace or simplifying.

Even the best changes in life induce stress. Getting married, having a child, being promoted at work, or moving into a new home all signify endings as well as beginnings. To live consciously is to recognize these endings and honor the feelings they inspire, then go on to embrace new beginnings.

Chaos theory postulates that nature continually breaks apart into chaos, then reorganizes itself into a higher, more sophisticated order. Awareness helps move the process and direct it toward better outcomes.

Everyone has a balance point where work, romance, family, friends, finances, physical environment, and personal health and growth flow in perfect harmony. Recognizing the enormous inner resources of knowledge and creativity within can help us survive and thrive in spite of change and transition.

Judy Garrity is a Personal/Professional Coach and former Director of the Montana Prevention Resource Center. She currently resides in Aurora, Colorado. For more information, visit Judy's website at www.geocities.com/jrgcoaching

Assessing and Interpreting Transitions and Mobility as a Risk Factor

By Jackie Jandt, Project Coordinator, Community Incentive Program

Stability and predictability are important anchors for children, particularly in today's fast-paced world. Even normal school transitions are times of stress, during which significant increases in problem behaviors can occur. In communities where families often move in and out, or from place to place within the community, there are higher rates of crime, drug use, and school dropout.

What you can use to measure transitions and mobility as a risk factor:		
	Data to Collect	**Source**
1	Net Migration Rate	http://oraweb.hhs.state.mt.us:9999/prev/
2	New Home Construction mt.us:9999/prev/	http://oraweb.hhs.state.
3	Rental Residential Properties	http://oraweb.hhs.state.mt.us:9999/prev/
4	Survey Questions such as: A. Have you changed homes in the last 12 months? B. How many times have you changed homes since kindergarten? C. Have you changed schools in the past year? D. How many times have you changed schools since kindergarten? E. Do people move in and out of your neighborhood a lot?	The Montana Prevention Needs Assessment
5	Locally designed surveys	Key Informant Interviews

Other useful data sources might include the Chamber of Commerce, Real Estate Offices, City/County Planner's Office, U.S. Naturalization and Immigration Service.

Analyze the data:

1. ***What do the raw data tell you?*** At first glance, what do the data tell you? Do the raw numbers impress you as being low? Average? High? Are there red flags?
2. ***How do the data compare to previous years? Is there a trend?*** By comparing numbers for previous years, you can begin to get a picture of how the data has been changing over time. Is it increasing? Decreasing? Staying the same? How have trends changed in relation to population changes?
3. ***How do our data compare with other similar data (e.g., national, state, county)?*** Are the trends similar? Are the rates about the same? Are they going up or down?
4. ***What can be interpreted from the data?*** After reviewing the raw data, trends and comparisons (if available), what can you interpret from your analysis? What is happening? Do you know *why* it is occurring? What could have caused the trend? What does the observed level or trend tell you about this risk or protective factor? What other factors or events could account for the data?
5. ***Are there relationships among risk factors that you can identify based on the data you have?*** Examine your data across risk and protective factors.
6. ***Should you prioritize this risk factor?*** The more information obtained about the indicator data, the easier this question will be to answer

Help reduce risk:

The negative effects of transition can be mitigated by preparing young people in advance for what to expect, and by keeping as much stability and predictability as possible in their lives. A favorite toy, book, or video can be a source of stability when a child moves a lot. Joining with neighbors to welcome new arrivals is a great way to find out who's moving in and to communicate the neighborhood's values.

Examples of programs that help mitigate the negative effects of transition:

School Transitions

Adolescent Transitions Program

The Adolescent Transitions Program is a school-based, multi-component intervention program for high-risk adolescents and their parents. This program provides parents with family management skills and children with the skills to self-regulate problem behavior. This program is considered a "Best Practice."

Contact: Thomas J. Dishion Ph.D.
Oregon Social Learning Center, Inc.
207 East Fifth Ave, Suite 202
Eugene, OR 97401

Project PATHE

Project PATHE is a comprehensive program implemented in secondary schools that reduces disorder and improves the environment in order to enhance students' experiences and attitudes about school. This program is considered a "Best Practice."

Contact: Gary and Denise Gottfredson
Gottfredson Associates, Inc.
3239 B Corporate Court
Ellicott City, MD 21042
Telephone: (410) 461-5530
http://www.gottfredson.com

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PARITY: Promoting Academic Retention for Indian Tribal Youth

PARITY provides for a steering committee to restructure and enrich school curriculum with Native American social, cultural, and historical contributions to the various disciplines. Faculty members from participating universities regularly meet to discuss instructional methods and content.

Because of regular, cross-institutional exchanges and study at various locations and with a variety of teachers, this approach often becomes a school without walls. This program is considered a "Promising Practice."

Contact: Dr. Shelia Anne Webb, Dean
College of Education and Professional Studies
Jacksonville State University
Jacksonville, AL 36265

Community Transitions

Communities That Care

Communities That Care provides an effective process for mobilizing communities to address adolescent problems behaviors. Communities That Care involves a broad spectrum of individuals, groups and organizations in representation of community diversity.

In addition to the long-term effects of a community's efforts to address specific risk factors, the *Communities That Care* mobilization process itself addresses the risk factors of low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization and transitions and mobility. This program is considered a "Best Practice."

Contact: Jackie Jandt, Project Coordinator
Community Incentive Program
Addictive & Mental Disorders Division
PO Box 202951
Helena, MT 59620-2951
Telephone: (406) 444-0852

Promoting Successful Transitions: *The New One-Stop World*

By Sheila Hogan, Executive Director, The Career Training Institute and Business Resource Center, Helena, Montana

From its inception in 1983, the Career Training Institute has promoted long-term self-sufficiency by helping individuals prepare for careers. These days it takes a more multi-faceted approach to workforce development. CTI serves individuals preparing to enter the workforce as well as a growing number of employers seeking skilled workers who can succeed in the modern workplace.

Congress recently reorganized employment and training programs. The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) breathed its last on June 30; the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) came into being July 1. Rather than targeting only low-income adults, the WIA was designed to provide basic skills training to a range of people, including older workers.

Training is provided for youth and adults, and WIA will target clients with barriers to long-term employment, including low basic skills assessments, low income levels, disabilities, homeless-ness, school dropouts and/or those with offender status.

The new WIA design meant that the youth job training originally funded through the Summer Youth Employment Program could be pulled into a year-round program. This spring, the Career Training Institute was designated the single provider of WIA youth services to individuals between the ages of 14 and 21. Services include helping youth, meet education goals, acquire training, and begin long-term careers.

In addition to WIA training programs, the Career Training Institute also provides access to employment and training through a variety of other funding streams. CTI is the lead agency for the Work Readiness Component (WoRC) of the Families Achieving Independence in Montana (FAIM) program. Individuals referred to CTI receive case management services and are enrolled in one of more employment and training activities. CTI also provides training for residents of public housing through a contract with the Helena Housing Authority and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program. Training and support are also provided through a program funded by the Montana Legislature for displaced homemakers who find themselves in need of short-term training.

CTI plays an active role in community development and is closely allied with the US Small Business Administration. The newly-formed Business Resource Center at CTI provides a number of services for individuals interested in starting, maintaining and expanding small business enterprises in the Helena area. The Business Resource Center staff can also help entrepreneurs with loan counseling and business plan development. Additionally, the Business Resource Center offers classroom training in strategies for small business success.

CTI is playing a growing role in promoting nontraditional employment opportunities. Jobs held by 25 percent or less of the labor force often provide high-wage, high-skill career opportunities. CTI has forged partnerships with agencies that offer training in heavy equipment operation, commercial truck driving, and the growing field of global positioning technology. The nontraditional approach offers job seekers entry into stable careers that provide higher wages and benefits; CTI Counselors can help clients navigate the possibilities inherent in these choices.

The latest innovative activity at CTI is a pilot project offered in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Human Services. The Individual Development Account (IDA) program enables low-income Montana families to save, build assets and enter the financial mainstream by rewarding low-income working families when they begin saving toward buying a first home, going to college or starting a small business. The incentive is generated by matching funds, using a variety of public and private sources. There is evidence that low-income families will save regularly and begin to acquire assets if they are provided with proper incentives and supports. IDA programs currently exist in about 250 communities nationwide, and all but three states have embraced IDA policies or programs. Following successful implementation of the IDA project in the Helena area, CTI and the state plan to make services available statewide.

Healthy Transitions in Native American Communities

By Daria Meyer, PRC VISTA

The Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation began operation in 1993, in response to the high demand for a safe haven for youth. The Boys and Girls Club provides many opportunities for its 850 active members.

By some estimates, the drop-out rate for this reservation is 60-70 percent. Last year alone, 521 youth were placed on probation with the Juvenile Court Advocate based at the Boys and Girls Club. Over 50 percent of club participants come from single-parent households.

Mentoring is integrated into all club activities. The club strives to help young people improve their lives by building self-esteem and providing support during critical periods of growth and transition. Mentors establish a basis for trust and honesty, and provide youth with stability, consistency, and a caring environment.

Two of the most exciting programs in operation at this time are the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) and the Youth Print Shop. The Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) provides an environment in which youth are encouraged to make healthy decisions during the difficult transition from middle to high school. Funded by a three-year grant awarded to the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), JUMP targets an audience of at-risk youth between the ages of ten and eighteen. Modeled after Big Brothers Big Sisters, a well-established mentoring program, JUMP is geared to helping at-risk youth.

Objectives include providing guidance for at-risk youth and their families, discouraging the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and reducing violent behavior. Additional goals are to increase participation in school and community activities, to improve academic performance by 30 percent and to decrease the school drop-out rate by 25 percent.

JUMP activities include parenting classes, orientations, family counseling, anger management classes, mentor training sessions, and "cultural night." An advisory group and case management team currently provides assistance and helps maintain consistent relationships with local education agencies, including the St. Labre Indian School, Lame Deer High School and Northern Cheyenne Tribal Schools.

The Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation also sponsors the Youth Print Shop, which provides job skills training, economic development opportunities, and offers alternative activities that provide an opportunity to earn legitimate money and gain independence. The Youth Print Shop supports participants during times of transition to more advanced training programs and/or educational opportunities, on and off the reservation. The goal of this project is to reduce overall community youth use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs 25-30 percent by the end of year three. The program will decrease risk factors and increase protective factors within the community by providing stability and extended opportunities for youth.

The future of the Youth Print Shop is optimistic. The focus is silk-screen design and technical work and during its first year of operation, the program accumulated $40,000. Revenue has almost doubled this year. Upcoming ventures include partnering with an off-reservation company to expand business, receive more recognition, acquire a broader customer base, and offer jobs in the silk screen field to youth who transition to Billings to further their educations.

Building Neighborhoods

By Bob Oaks, Director, North-Missoula Community Development Corporation

"The mind—the culture—has two little tools, grammar and lexicon: a decorated sand bucket and a matching shovel. With these we bluster about the continents and do all the world's work. With these we try and save our very lives." Annie Dillard: "Total Eclipse" in Teaching a Stone to Talk, Harper and Row, 1982.

I work for the North Missoula Community Development Corporation (NMCDC) where we try very hard to deal with real community issues by "thinking outside the box"—or outside the *sandbox*, to borrow Annie Dillard's phrase. Of primary importance is the work we do to address issues of transience, access and self-determination among neighborhood residents.

In 1997, the Missoula Office of Planning and Grants surveyed and compiled information about the two largest neighborhoods served by NMCDC. The results showed that two-thirds of the sampled residents had lived in their neighborhood for less than five years, and over one-third planned to move within five years. Half of the neighbors surveyed stated they would prefer living in some other neighborhood. Twenty percent of the sampled households included at least one member who was unemployed and looking for work; burdensome housing costs were counted among the neighborhood's most serious problems. No wonder: in 1997, 67 percent of the sampled neighborhood households reported that they spent more than 30 percent of their gross incomes on housing. This is consistent with findings from a 1995 "Blue Ribbon Commission" *On Human Services in Missoula*, which identified unstable shelter as one of the highest risk factors influencing all

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Building Neighborhoods

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of the age groups studied. That same year, our local elementary school had a 60 percent turnover in its student body.

In his 1989 study, *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems,* Harold Hodgkinson says, " . . . like preventive medicine, [strategies] could be based on limiting the area in which potential poverty families are most vulnerable – housing. A range of programs needs to be developed to accomplish this goal – to keep working families out of poverty in the first place. Housing is the most important area of vulnerability. If low-income children were living in economically and socially secure housing with some rent protection, there is little doubt that most of them could stay out of poverty and in school, while their parent(s) could stay on the job and off welfare. We are just beginning to understand the effects of housing on many other areas of life, including education, health, crime, etc. The costs of housing innovations would be a small drop in the bucket, compared to the benefits of having more kids staying in school to become taxpaying job holders!"

This theory looks at the big picture, and though the idea behind implementing proactive strategies isn't new, the big picture perspective does need better promotion. Without it, we find it very easy to slip into the flawed ethos of seeing communities in fragmented ways, seeing trees instead of the forest. But compartmentalized thinking is almost always counterproductive and mistaking symptoms for causes doesn't help us invest our resources wisely. When we bemoan the "loss of community" along with "the breakdown of the family" as causes of social malaise we forget that humans naturally interrelate with one another and with their environment. *People* relate, not through text books or commission reports, but *on the ground, in their neighborhoods.* The NMCDC takes a holistic view and an ecological approach to *neighborhood* because investments promoting livable neighborhoods build community and reinforce families.

The NMCDC believes that residents are the primary "experts" about their neighborhood, so we strive to see the neighborhood the way the residents do. This effort is furthered by the fact that our by-laws require that neighborhood residents must hold more than fifty percent of the seats on our Board of Directors. We take strategic planning directives from Missoula's Joint Northside/Westside Neighborhood Plan, which is citizen-initiated and government-funded.

Our neighborhood began the planning process in 1996; since then, there have been more than 45 community meetings. Ratified this past summer by the Missoula City Council, the overriding vision of the Northside/Westside Neighborhood Plan is the desire of neighborhood residents to "perpetuate, re-create and further promote their historic neighborhoods' development as a community for working class Missoulians." Neighbors want to "improve opportunities for access to economic security, affordable housing, safe transportation, necessary human services, recreational facilities, open space, and meaningful social interaction for people of all ages and abilities."

Planning participants agreed that " . . . the collective experiences of the people who live and work in the neighborhoods provide the best source for identifying neighborhood strengths and crafting strategies for meeting neighborhood goals." Based on plan action items, NMCDC has initiated (or is in the process of initiating) programs or projects around affordable home ownership, support for our neighborhood school, open space and historic preservation, community gardening and arts projects and economic and recreational facilities development. The extensive public outreach in both the Healthy Neighborhood Project and in the creation of the comprehensive neighborhood plan taught valuable lessons to the staff and board of our neighborhood community development corporation.

When asked, *"What makes a good neighborhood?"* residents spoke of safe streets, access to transportation, conversations over back fences, front porches that faced sidewalks, shade trees, bike paths and walkways. They talked about family stability and equated that with decent-paying work and affordable housing. They spoke of neighbors sharing responsibility by turning a watchful eye to all the neighborhood's kids. People wanted public gathering places and community gardens. They wanted safe places for kids to play and activities for them to enjoy. They wanted meaningful ways to become involved in their community. And they wanted to feel that there would be a community to embrace them when they were old.

If we look outside the box that is the conventional model of community health, we find vindication for the wisdom of neighbors. In a 1997 report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being," there are a number of unsurprising conclusions:

— Children who are poor are more likely to have difficulty in school, become teen parents, and as adults, earn less and be unemployed more often.

— A major key indicator for children's good health is secure parental employment and adequate, uncrowded and affordable housing.

— Nationwide, between 1978 and 1993, the percentage of households with children paying more than 30 percent of their gross incomes on housing rose from 15 percent to 27 percent.

The neighborhood-based nonprofit, NMCDC, started with an investment that St. Patrick Hospital made in a burgeoning citizen activist campaign for neighborhood resurgence. This investment, the "Healthy Neighborhood Project," earned St. Pat's a national award from the American Hospital Association in 1999. The North-Missoula Community Development Corporation was incorporated in 1996 and received its nonprofit status in February 1998.

The North Missoula Community Development Corporation tries to see the social "big picture" within the context of neighborhood. We want to make a better neighborhood, one in which families *want* to put down roots. We work hard to create opportunities for people of modest means to do just that. Ours is an experiment based on interrelationships – a way to be more than just about housing, or mitigation of poverty, or parks and infrastructure development or historic or open space preservation. We want to be about all that and more. We want to encourage the synergies that relationships generate and to see our neighborhood revitalized as a good home for all of us.

Bob Oaks is a long-time neighborhood activist and former President of the Northside Neighborhood Association and the NMCDC Board of Directors.

Poverty, Mobility and the Virtual Community

By Dan Sullivan, Director of Program Development
Rocky Mountain Development Council

PowerUP
http://www.powerup.org/

The "Digital Divide" is used to describe a lack of access to computers and online resources. According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, this "digital divide" currently breaks along many fault lines, including education, geography and income.

Access to technology and computer-based skills are vital to America's social and economic well-being. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that by the year 2000, 60 percent of jobs will require skills with technology. The disparity between those with access to technology and those without–if left unaddressed–will establish an impenetrable barrier . . . to quality jobs, educational opportunities and access to information that Americans will need to be successful. The U.S. can avert a potentially devastating new social inequality between digital "haves" and "have-nots" by mobilizing the nation's skills and resources.

For more information, visit the PowerUP website at: http://www.powerup.org/

Although there are not any hard data on the moving habits of the low-income population, a review of the Helena-area Low Income Energy Assistance caseload suggests that about twenty-five percent of these households move each year to a different primary residence. Therefore, of 1,200 area households, approximately three hundred are on the move each year. Moving usually occurs during the summer months; individuals and families tend to stay put during the winter. Of the three hundred families that move, approximately seventy-five percent are single-member households; twenty-five percent are families. In this example, twenty-five percent equals seventy-five (75) families in our immediate area. Due to family instability and the lack of affordable housing, many of these families live in–and are constantly moving to–sub-standard housing including old trailers.

Prevention research tells us that children need continuity and consistency in their relationships with family and community. The research also tells us that isolation from family and community is a primary risk factor. Some children are resilient and overcome the worst of environmental and behavioral conditions. Sadly, the preponderance of these children do not grow up to be healthy. Those of us in the social service world know the probable outcomes of high mobility . . . dependency on public systems, encounters with law enforcement and the courts, burdening the schools, poor physical and mental health, all of which culminate in *more* family dysfunction in the next generation. Our public systems tend to deal with these problems after the fact—in a remedial way. The social service system needs to move toward a model that catches individuals early on the continuum before intervention and remediation are necessary.

Having set the stage, here's an idea for the readers' consideration. What if we bring prevention and community programming to low-income households via the internet? Consider this idea in light of the following computing laws:

1) Moore's Law states that computing power doubles every eighteen (18) months; and,
2) Metcalfe's Law states that the value of a computer network is squared by its number of users.

Technology is already driving the country's productivity, so why not use this power to help low-income families? *Technology can be a very effective tool for reducing the isolation resulting from the high mobility of low-income families.*

Let's examine a possible scenario: Mary, a single mother with two (2) children, logs on to a virtual school at night. She is doing course work that includes life skills, budgeting, home buyers, substance abuse, workforce preparation, relationship building, basic education and parenting. Additionally, her children would learn basic computer and cognitive skills through the site. At a regular time, Mary could log on to a chat room and "talk" with a therapist, job counselor, educator or other young moms. Perhaps an incentive system could be devised whereby Mary does course work for her assistance benefits and where, ultimately, she could earn a diploma and be offered job placement opportunities.

While this system may not be appropriate for all families, we see many young mothers in our Head Start Program who would jump at the chance to participate. Though establishing such a digital school community would mean funding curriculum development, hardware and staff, these costs would be insignificant when compared to the price we pay when dealing with people who have reached the crisis end of the continuum.

This approach could serve as a lightening rod, drawing agencies and the various programming sectors together in the interest of families. Finally, its important to note the "Virtual School" lends itself to agency partnerships, collaboration and integration. In prevention programming, we know there is no magic bullet. Nonetheless, using available technologies to reduce family isolation and teach basic values and skills could be a powerful arrow in the anti-poverty quiver.

The Third Way

By Paul Miller, Ph.D., University of Montana

In Montana, as across our nation, we are increasingly concerned about the development of a permanent "underclass" that will never escape poverty or near-poverty. We are also justifiably concerned about the "declining middle class" and the working poor. Montana has the lowest per capita income in the nation. On the other hand, we lead the nation in terms of the number of workers who hold down second and third jobs. This grim fact is illustrated by a joke currently making the rounds: When the Montanan heard that millions of jobs had been created in the last eight years, he said: "I believe it. I've got three of them."

Our whole society is in a period of rapid transition. In recognition of widespread change, President Clinton stated, "We have moved past the sterile debate between those who say government is the enemy and those who say government is the answer. My fellow Americans, we have found a Third Way." (1999) Other world leaders, including Tony Blair of Great Britain, Gerhard Schroeder of Germany, and Lionel Jospin of France, are all championing this Third Way on an international level. All believe in making generous provisions for education and training. President Clinton takes the position that education and training should be carried out through partnerships between the private sector (business/corporate), the public sector (government), and the non-profit/voluntary sector (special-purpose groups and associations).

Transition and change characterize our world, now more than ever before. Individualism, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to rapid change have become necessities. We must commit to the globalization of economic markets and to replacing divisive Cold War tactics with a world connected through the instant communication of the Internet and integrated through rapid global market exchanges. In the Third Way system, world markets are perceived as continuous exchanges, as free as possible from the fetters and impediments of organized labor, national tariffs, governmental controls, and welfare state programs.

Inevitably, rapid social change has a destabilizing effect on national, regional, and local economies. The Third Way advocates the need to develop human capital (individuals' skills and abilities) and social capital (family support systems) under governmental leadership. Human and social capital development are antidotes to the expected upheavals and disorientations that are occuring among many workers, their businesses, and their communities. Those who adopt this philosophy extol the growth potential of the American economy, and the possibility of creating millions of jobs.

Even so, there are growing concerns about impacts. The Third Way represents a focus on economic restructuring and rapid social change. Behind the work emphasis is a more general and pervasive support for the values of individualism. The so-called "new individualism" requires a retreat from tradition and custom and the moral universes they spawned. The key phrases are the "construction of new moral universes" and the acceptance of "personal responsibility" for decisions. This thinking is based on the *politics of choice* within market constraints, and upon the consequences and responsibilities rising from choice.

What does this have to do with the well-being of our society—and more particularly, the well-being of those of us who live in Montana? Whether we realize it or not, the Third Way has already affected us; its impacts will continue to challenge and test us. One of the greatest challenges that comes with rapid technological change will be the social impacts . . . there will be winners and losers within every community. Those who lack the skills needed for a future of successful competition in a fast-changing world will lose. In Montana, those who are poor and who lack financial and/or geographical access to the education and training necessary to compete for living wages will lose. Those who live in areas where the structure of the local economy does not provide opportunities for living wages will lose. Young families experiencing the stresses resulting from hard work, low wages, and limited access to education and training will lose.

To mitigate these impacts, President Clinton vowed to make funds and resources available to those adversely affected by transition. Unfortunately, the required level of commitment from Congress has not been forthcoming. Although the familiar bromide "no pain, no gain" is probably true even in this context, the passage of welfare reform legislation and the further reductions in social support programs incorporated within the balanced budget amendment were not necessarily based on commitments to training, education, and child care benefits sufficient to meet transitional needs.

The Third Way is based on the idea that new partnerships will be formed among governments (the public sector), businesses and corporations (the private sector), and the non-profit/volunteer sector. Americans in general—and Montanans in particular—have strong cultural inclinations to form non-profit associations. Montana's citizens are notoriously generous with their voluntary donations of time and money. Even so, it's hard to build on this inclination when the nature of these partnerships isn't clear. Conceptualizing partnerships appropriate to our needs, our cultural values, and our commitment to democratic processes must become one of our top priorities.

Someone recently said, "*. . . a nation is more than a flag and an anthem; it is a collection of people, because they are linked by culture and belief, who are willing to pool certain of their resources so that all of their members have a fair chance of succeeding.*" I believe we can find an appropriate balance between government, the private sector, and non-profit sectors . . . between national and initiatives and local control . . . between individual competition and community stability. I also believe that, given the chance, Montanans will embrace the idea of public, private, and non-profit partnerships with surprising commitment and vigor. It is up to us to be aggressive enough to form the strong partnerships that will help us meet the challenges and mitigate the impacts of the Third Way.

The Continuum of Care

By Jim Nolan, Chief, Intergovernmental Human Services Bureau
Human and Community Services Division

Homeless Survey

A recent survey of shelters, food banks and other public assistance venues in ten Montana communities identified 1,331 people as homeless —with nearly 20 percent of them under age 18. The survey indicates the major causes of homelessness are severe mental illness, chronic substance abuse and domestic violence, Other reasons include job loss, eviction and release from an institution. When asked to identify all the items or services they needed from a list of 13 choices, respondents listed their top five needs as: food/ clothing (474); medical care (472); place to live (457); job training/ skills (389); and mental health care-medication (382). When asked what elements have contributed to their homelessness, the top three answers were mental health (325), lost job/no skills (261) and drugs/alcohol use (250).

Survey results and a summary are available on the Internet at www.dphhs.state. mt.us under What's Hot, or by calling 444-2596 to have a copy sent via fax.

Homelessness began to emerge as an issue nationally—and in Montana—during the mid 1980's. Realization that the problem was not confined to our largest urban areas led Congress to pass the McKinney Act of 1987. The McKinney Act authorized a number of programs that directly addressed homelessness in terms of emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing, mental health services, alcohol and drug treatment, veterans, and job training. The list of funded programs was long and the federal investment substantial.

What soon became apparent, however, was the fragmented nature of the attack on homelessness. Considerable resources may have been available, but communities had no incentive to look at homelessness in a comprehensive manner. Organizations could continue to apply for individual programs targeting one segment of the homeless problem, but the larger picture that included causes and solutions remained out of focus.

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recognized the fragmentation and implemented the Continuum of Care (COC) process. Simply put, the COC tries to end homelessness by bringing together all parts of a community interested in fighting the issue. The goal is to assist homeless families in moving to self-sufficiency and, hopefully, permanent housing. HUD has identified four components as basic to a successful COC:

1. Prevention, outreach and assessment to identify the needs of homeless individuals;
2. Provision of emergency shelters with referrals to service providers;
3. Transitional housing with supportive services; and
4. Permanent housing.

Until four years ago, there was no statewide effort in Montana to enter the COC world. A couple of local communities, most notably Missoula, had begun the process, but large areas of the state were not engaged in this type of comprehensive planning. At the urging of HUD, DPHHS began to bring people together from around the state with the idea that one comprehensive statewide application would be submitted, which would be used to fund a number of local projects. To my knowledge, this remains the only statewide process in the country.

Our COC has representatives from nearly every major town as well as from many homeless service providers across the state. We meet quarterly to devise strategies for ending homelessness, to identify needs, coordinate resources and prepare our annual application for funding. In its brief existence, the COC has consistently increased resources and expanded statewide participation. Our application this year includes nine projects around the state and totals nearly $1.8 million.

Our COC is open to anyone who wishes to participate. We are always looking to expand into areas of Montana where resources may be scarce. The group operates on a consensus basis. Ideas and proposals are freely discussed, critiqued and reworked. The spirit of cooperation has resulted in everything from new federal resources being made available to the receipt of a Best Practices award from HUD. Our success has been the direct result of people coming forward to look at the needs of the state as a whole. When collective interests come first, everyone wins.

For more information, please feel free to call me at 447-4260, or e-mail me at jnolan@state.mt.us.

Gods Love Shelter
Family Transitional Program

By Maria Nyberg, Director

God's Love Shelter Family Transitional Center was the outcome of a grassroots community movement toward better services for homeless women and their families. Initially, several agencies in Helena each provided one week of emergency shelter in a hotel to homeless families and single women. It finally became evident that most homeless families spent significant time and energy just going from agency to agency, justifying their case and securing another week of shelter. In the process, little time or energy was left with which to generate long-term solutions. Awareness led to a collaborative community process through which several agencies pooled their resources into one emergency shelter program. The Helena Cooperative Shelter Program was run by God's Love Shelter, and overseen by the Hunger and Homeless Coalition, a multi-agency committee that meets monthly. The Helena Cooperative Shelter Program provided a maximum of thirty days shelter and case management services. While this was a significant improvement, the community and God's Love Shelter continued to see unmet need. More services geared to families and single women had to be made available if the cycle of homelessness was to be broken.

In January 1999, God's Love Family Transitional Center began serving homeless families and single women. To qualify for participation, individuals must be homeless, willing to address their issues and make at least a six-month commitment to the program. Individuals who enter the program have often experienced multiple periods of homelessness, mental health problems, addictions and poor physical health. Most are not well-educated or well-trained, may have legal problems, and are unable to manage within the context of our complicated social system. Many experience a deep-rooted sense of hopelessness and few are connected to positive community support systems.

Our program takes a holistic approach to meeting need. In order to provide opportunity for change, the program relies heavily on a relationship-based approach to case management and counseling. Individuals' needs are met by connecting them to existing services within the community, both formal and informal. The focus is reconnecting the individual/family with the community through positive relationships.

God's Love Family Transitional Center can serve nine families. Each room is equipped with beds/daybeds, dressers, a television, a small refrigerator and a half bath. The facility has common showers, a common kitchen for snacks, a laundry facility, a playroom and offices. The setting provides for a lot of interaction among residents and staff. Residents provide support for one another, give each other feedback, and have the opportunity to learn how to deal with issues honestly and directly.

Modeling is the most direct way to teach life skills, and in our setting, many opportunities arise to model functional behavior. In the beginning, staff members may have to carry the vision and hope for the individuals participating in transitional programs because these people have simply experienced too many failures. Having lost hope, they are afraid to try again.

One of the first steps to success is to reduce individual stress by providing for basic safety and security needs, including shelter, food, clothing and medications. When people feel safe, they can begin concentrating on the issues in their lives, whether mental health, addiction, lack of education, lack of employment, poor relationships or legal issues. Small successes give the courage to attempt greater challenges. While the staff cannot change *for* the individual, they can—and do—provide the support, instruments, encouragement and accountability necessary to inspire hope and lead to successful transitions.

Navigating Rough Waters

By Matthew Dale, Executive Director, The Friendship Center, Helena

The Friendship Center of Helena specializes in helping families navigate through a myriad of transitions. Our agency offers shelter and other services to those fleeing domestic violence within our tri-county area. Beginning with our first contact with the family – usually at a crisis point – we begin to help battered women* identify and overcome the many challenges they will face in the coming months. When a woman comes to us, she has decided that her safety – or her children's –is in jeopardy and that action must be taken. Even though she has found the courage to flee, most often she has given little thought to what will happen next. But no matter who put the woman in contact with a domestic violence service provider, shelter staff is there to help her navigate through the many transitions that lie ahead.

Leaving a battering household behind takes considerable time and energy. The transition period can last many weeks, depending on a family's resources and connection to the community. Typically, *emergency* shelters allow stays of up to sixty days. If available, *transitional* shelters allow for stays of up to six months. For some families, even six months is not long enough. Every one of these families faces tremendous change. How a family handles that change, and how long it takes to move through the turbulence and into calmer waters, is unique. Even so, of the approximately one hundred families the Friendship Center shelters each year, most will make the transition somewhere on the six-day to six-month transition continuum.

Having left an abusive situation, every aspect of' a woman's is upended. For this reason, domestic violence programs provide a broad scope of services that can help families make the decisions that must be

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Navigating Rough Waters

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made. Those fleeing domestic violence are given assistance with understanding the criminal justice system and offered group and individual counseling. Since medical and dental needs may have gone unmet, assistance in securing providers is available. And of course, finding permanent, safe housing is a priority, since shelter life eventually ends. Case managers help clients face these issues, and many, many others. Clients work with their case managers to identify needs and to find solutions. The transition from living with a battering relationship to independence, if undertaken alone, is daunting. With assistance, it can be broken into pieces and made manageable.

All who work with survivors of domestic violence know that if staying away becomes too difficult, women may cope by returning to the violent situation. For this reason, we are absolutely committed to making transition as easy and positive as possible. Shelter policies are designed to make the woman's decision to leave the battering household as comfortable as possible. There are no costs for program services. Shelter is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Shelters have undisclosed locations to decrease the likelihood that the batterer will find the family. Case managers offer to accompany residents to court and to other appointments.

Many services are also available for children, particularly in larger shelters across the state. These programs employ a specially-trained "children's advocate" who coordinates the shelter's efforts on behalf of kids. The advocate offers individual and group counseling, serves as the agency's liaison with the schools, and helps oversee the transition from a two-parent, violent household, to a single-parent, more predictable living situation. We believe it essential for children to return to school as soon as possible. School is a "normal" environment for children, and maintaining normalcy helps ease transition. Additionally, as a result of a turbulent living situation, children may already be struggling academically, and often the move to the shelter has necessitated a change in schools. Having a staff member who is specifically dedicated to the best interests of children has been a tremendous addition to shelters in the past few years. If we are to reduce the number of families traumatized by violence in the future, our work during the formative years is extremely important. Providing kids with someone to talk to, work with *and have fun with* is a very positive preventive measure and expedites the transition process.

** Note: though men, too, can be victims of domestic violence, our callers are almost always female.*

Migrant and Seasonal Workers: *Primary and Preventive Health Care*

By Maria Stephens, Executive Director, Montana Migrant Council, Inc.

Even in these times of heavy mechanization, people spend long hours bent over hoes as they work in the fields. People still stand on ladders to pluck cherries from the trees and place them gently in heavy bags that cut into their shoulders. People still farm and ranch from sun to sun, unable to make enough money to live anywhere but in their cars or shacks where no one would ever live, given a choice. And there are still many, too many, unable to get the health care they need without help. Though it may surprise you, I am not talking about a third-world country…these people live right here in Montana.

Montana has 59.7 million acres of land in farms and ranches, second only to Texas. Unlike Texas, we do not have camps or communities for farm workers. These workers are scattered throughout Montana, and are generally isolated from larger cities and towns. Few have telephones and frequently more than one family must share a vehicle. We provide care to about 50 percent of Montana's estimated farm worker population of 10,400. About 80 percent of the families served are Hispanic and Spanish speaking. Some come from other states in the hopes of finding work, others have lived here for generations. The average yearly income of the families we serve is under $10,000.

The mission of the Montana Migrant Council, Inc. is to improve the lives of migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families, as well as other rural families living in poverty. Our focus is the provision of comprehensive primary and preventive health care. Our administrative offices and main clinic are located in Billings, and these operate year-round. A second year-around clinic is located in the eastern Montana community of Fairview. We also have seven seasonal clinics along the Yellowstone Valley, as well as in Beaverhead and Lake counties.

Our patients experience many barriers to good health care, including geographic isolation and language/cultural differences. Few families have insurance, and yet health care problems are common. Most of our patients report multiple health conditions, including hypertension, diabetes mellitus, mental health disorders, asthma, otitis media, contact dermatitis, sexually transmitted diseases and/or bronchitis. Forty percent suffer from dental health problems.

Our registered nurses and nurse practitioners provide a full compliment of services according to protocols and procedures developed in concert with our Clinical Director, In-kind Medical Director and In-kind Dental Director. Nurses review a health care history with the patient, assess complaints or concerns, provide care and/or make appointments. Nurses also make referrals to contractual providers for care that falls outside our scope.

Because migrant health clinics operate throughout the state, we coordinate services with providers, health care systems and social service programs. We also network with a wide range of services and agencies.

As we are involved at the milestones of our patients' lives, trust and understanding are developed. We believe that the seeds we plant today in preventive health care will blossom tomorrow, whether or not we get to see it.

The Montana Migrant Council, Inc., a non-profit, private organization, opened its doors in 1972.

When the Smoke Clears

The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP)

By Cindy Lewis, Communications Coordinator

Approximately 21 percent of Montanans use tobacco, and every day, four Montanans die from tobacco-related diseases . . . this means about 900 men and 500 women die each year.

No one will argue that Montana needs to do something about tobacco use. Now, through the national tobacco settlement, we have the means to change these trends and improve public health. The 1999 Montana Legislature allocated $7 million for the 2000-2001 biennium to the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) from Montana's share of the November 1998 Attorneys General Settlement Agreement with the tobacco companies.

The Governor's Advisory Council on Tobacco Use Prevention began its work in October 1999. Using information from statewide public meetings, the experiences of other states, nationwide experts and a comprehensive planning process, the Council finalized the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention 5-Year Plan in March 2000. The Plan provides direction for a comprehensive program designed to affect the awareness, attitudes, and, ultimately, the behavior of Montanans. This will be accomplished through statewide media messages, community-based programs, the work of schools and tribal organizations, healthcare groups and public-private partnerships. The following programs have emerged as essential to the success of these efforts.

Twenty-eight community-based programs—including thirteen new programs—provide tobacco use prevention services in forty of Montana's fifty-six counties.

Seven of the eight Montana *tribal governments* and all five *Urban Indian Centers* will implement tobacco use prevention programs. MTUPP has also contracted with the *University of Montana*, which will train Native Americans in grant-writing. The training is intended to help tribes and urban centers succeed in obtaining additional resources for tobacco prevention.

The *Office of Public Instruction* will work with schools. They implement tobacco-free policies, provide teacher training in tobacco-use prevention curricula, fund grants, purchase curriculum materials, and develop programs for tobacco prevention in grades K-12.

Banik Creative Group of Great Falls is responsible for designing, developing and implementing a statewide tobacco use prevention campaign that includes all media forms. A statewide 12-week pilot campaign on secondhand smoke was completed in early September. The campaign used 114 outdoor billboards, more than 12,000 radio and television commercials, and broadcast public service announcements in 20 cities and towns across Montana. Telephone surveys taken before and after the campaign will be combined with input from eight focus groups. These devices will be used to measure changes in awareness about the hazards of secondhand smoke. Once all feedback from the pilot is analyzed, the campaign will be adjusted. The main awareness campaign will begin in January 2001.

The *University of Montana* will provide training and technical assistance to MTUPP community-based and Native American contractors; develop tobacco use prevention training modules, implement statewide conferences, and develop and operate a comprehensive Clearinghouse Resource Library.

Group Health Cooperative of Seattle, Washington provides a toll-free cessation quit line to Montana residents. The resource line links those who are ready to quit to cessation services and resources in their area. Group Health will assist communities in developing local cessation services. Between August 31 and Oct. 2, the Quit Line (1-877-612-1585) fielded nearly 300 calls from Montana citizens.

Montana State University is pilot testing the MOST of Us™ Project, a social norms media-marketing campaign intended to reduce initiation of tobacco products by youth. The initial focus area is in Western Montana. (Website: mostofus.org.)

The *University of Montana School of Pharmacy* will pilot test a one-year project through which pharmacists provide cessation counseling and pharmaceuticals for 100 Medicaid patients. To determine impact, successful cessation rates will be compared to national cessation data. MTUPP has also provided limited funding to the *Montana Medicaid Program* to allow clients access to more than one trial of cessation pharmaceuticals.

The *HELP Committee* in Havre continues implementation of its YAHOU project. YAHOU is an on-going youth-based prevention project built on a youth-empowerment model. Small stipends or grants are given to youth groups that design, develop, implement, and evaluate a variety of tobacco use prevention projects in their communities. (Website: aboutyahou.org)

MTUPP staff coordinates and works with existing and on-going surveillance and evaluation data, and will develop survey tools to accurately assess, measure and evaluate program components. Contractors are required to incorporate thorough evaluation measures in their projects. Results will be used to develop the 2001 Legislative Report and to shape overall program planning.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services is excited about the goals and progress of the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program. We look forward to providing ongoing information about our goals and successes through *The Prevention Connection.*

For more information, please contact Communications Coordinator, Cindy Lewis, at 443-2545 or clewis@mt.net.

The first statewide tobacco use prevention conference is planned for November 13-14 in Billings.

Shelter Plus Care

By Jeff Sturm, Golden Triangle Community Mental Health Center

Shelter Plus Care is a program designed to serve the homeless adults in Helena who have severe mental illness. Shelter Plus is a joint effort between Golden Triangle Community Mental Health Center, Housing and Urban Development and the Helena Housing Authority. The purpose is to provide the homeless mentally ill a safe place to live and a chance to put their lives back together in a healthy environment.

Housing units are located in Helena, close to vital community mental health support services. Currently, Golden Triangle has twenty-four certificates in partnership with the Helena Housing Authority; fourteen are filled and we are working with Helena Housing to fill the last ten. In the Helena area, the vast majority of the homeless mentally ill are single, so these certificates provide for one-bedroom units of Section 8, sponsor-based rental assistance. Even so, the seriously mentally ill experience great difficulty obtaining and retaining housing. Though a limited number of property owners do work with Golden Triangle to make housing available, Shelter Plus Care clients are often unable to utilize their certificate/voucher because they are unable to find landlords who will rent to them. For this reason, *Shelter Plus Care* often helps secure housing.

Since we can apply for ten more certificates each year, more apartments will be needed as the program grows. And it *will* grow: though these placements are an improvement, people remain on the waiting list for Shelter Plus Care services.

Our goal is to see fifty percent of the Shelter Plus Care participants who find housing remain there for at least one year. Since program inception, three participants have begun receiving Helena Housing Section 8 vouchers of their own. Five have been with the program for one and a half years. Nine have been in housing since June 2000.

There are specific guidelines for qualification for Shelter Plus Care, as well as guidelines that must be followed after acceptance. Applicants must participate in services from Golden Triangle and have a current treatment plan. Treatment must be followed if the participant wishes to continue living in a Shelter Plus Care facility. As part of the treatment plan, an individual service planner assists each participant, thus helping ensure successful, individualized transition from homeless-ness. When successful, this program helps participants become—and remain—contributing members of society, to the very best of their individual abilities.

CSAP Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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Montana Prevention Resource Center
P.O. Box 4210
Helena, MT 59604

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